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JANUARY - MARCH 2016

from flab to fab

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2016 SPORTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

Saipan Little League Baseball
The island's future baseball players will take the field to battle for the Major, Junior, Senior, and Big League division titles.

NMISF Season Opening Meet
Northern Marianas Islands Swimming Federation's first sanctioned tournament of the season will feature 10 individual events and two relays.

Victorian Junior Grasscourt Championships
This tennis tournament is held in Australia with the Malika Miyawaki and Isabel Heras representing the CNMI in the youth competition.

FEBRUARY

Coconut Tennis Classic
This is Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association's second tournament for the 2015-2016 season and will feature competitions in the juniors singles and doubles and unique mixed-up doubles.

NMA Annual Sports Banquet
Northern Marianas Sports Association honors the athletes, coaches, and officials who had outstanding performance in the 2015 season.

DL Corp Invitational Basketball League Season 4
The DL Corp.-backed league returns after taking a break in 2015 with San Antonio out to defend its title against eight other squads.

MARCH

Tagaman Triathlon
The oldest triathlon event in the western Pacific will be back anew and will test the skills of on and off-island athletes in a road race.

XTERRA Saipan Championships
XTERRA's Crown Jewel will bring some of the world's best triathletes to Saipan as they negotiate one of the toughest off-road courses in the tour.

NMIFA Spring Youth League
The various football clubs on Saipan dispute the girls and boys U15, boys U18, and co-ed U12 division titles in this competitive league.

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You'd think that after so many repeated failures over the years we'd collectively give up on New Year's resolutions. Yet here we are again, cranking them out as 2016 begins, trotting out the old, dusty ones for reuse and recycling and even minting fresh or "enhanced" ones to greet the new year with.

However, much like the tchotchkes we get at weddings that are thrown away by the time we get to the parking lot, many of our good intentions fall by the wayside in a week or two. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions," so goes the aphorism and that has never been truer in the case of New Year's resolutions.

The high rate of failure, however, may have nothing to do with our lack of willpower or inability stick to a goal over an extended period of time. Rather, it is the realistic attainability of the goals we set. As Kaisa Anderson points out in her article, "Beat the holiday belly bulge" ***(Page 4)***, making small weekly resolutions could be the key. Coupled with appropriate rewards, small weekly goals are easier to achieve, easier to retain in front of our minds, and much more rewarding in the long run.

Jon Perez's story on Derek Cutting, "From fat to fab" ***(Page 8)***, is a perfect example of someone who, through sheer willpower and discipline, managed to beat the curse of genetics to transform himself from an obese and flabby 238-pounder into a mountain of muscles and washboard abs that just won't quit. For Derek, it was the dire warning of his physician that got him on the road to healthy living. We may not all have Derek's discipline and work ethic but his story is enough to show that blaming Mom and Pop for our slow metabolism is not going to cut it.

For this latest edition of TAGA *Sports*, we would like to introduce a new contributor, Dre Delos Santos, a homegrown talent and an alumnus of Mount Carmel School who is now a certified strength coach in Honolulu. For his inaugural article, he outlines the five principles of fat loss ***(Page 10)***. Dre obtained his bachelor's degree in Kinesiology from the University of Hawaii so he knows whereof he speaks when he says there is no magic pill or fancy workouts that will get you losing that fat and losing it for good. (Darn, that's money down the drain for the supplements I got off eBay.)

As always, we welcome any feedback, story ideas, criticisms, corrections, etc. Just email them to editor@saipantribune.com. We hope this new year finds you well and our wishes for a healthier, more active 2016 for everyone!

Sinseramente,

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
Managing Editor

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COVER ART
Derek Cutting shows off his winning physique in last October's Dee Clayton Championships at the Pacific Islands Club's Charley's Cabaret.

Photography by
JON PEREZ

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WRITERS'BLOC

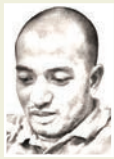
KAISA ANDERSON

Kaisa Anderson is a Registered Dietitian and works for PSS Food and Nutrition Services. She has enjoyed her holidays here on Saipan even though it feels like summer. Recently, she has been working on her backhand swing in tennis and is planning on keeping one New Year's resolution this year to read more books.

ROSELYN MONROYO

Roselyn's most memorable sports-related family time was watching basketball games on TV over dinner, with her mom criticizing players' lousy moves, her late dad contesting the referees' calls, and her brothers mimicking some highlight plays. With a heavy heart, she will try her very best this year not to eat rice…during dinners only.

JON PEREZ



Jon once thought of gaining a few pounds of muscle and joining a fitness contest. Now clearly out of shape after a vehicular accident last year, his aim for 2016, once he obtains clearance from his doctors, is to slowly get back on track.

MARK RABAGO

Mark, 5'6" (in elevator shoes), played against 6'3" beanpole Dalewin Cortez when the former was perennially glued to the bench while suiting up for Abyss and the latter starred for Naked Fish in the Inter-Restaurant Basketball League in the mid-2000s. Mark's New Year's resolution is to remove all fattening things in his apartment: All manner of mirrors and weighing scales.

JIM RAYPHAND

A self-proclaimed "jack-of-all trades, but master of none," Jim works for the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc., advocating for the rights of people with disabilities and aspires to publish do-it-yourself books as a plus-size fitness guru and sustainable pig farmer.

DRE DELOS SANTOS

Dre Delos Santos, a Mount Carmel School alumnus, earned his Bachelor's of Science in Kinesiology at the University of Hawaii and now runs his own fitness business as a certified strength coach in Honolulu. His New Year's resolution is to eat more vegetables and drink more water.

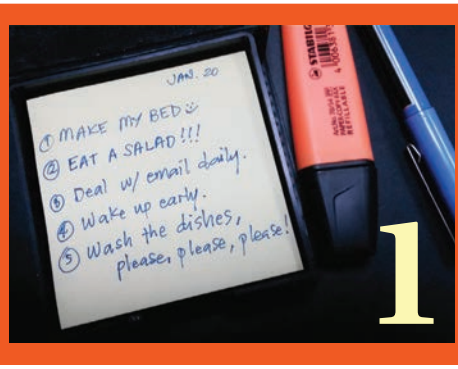
Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA Sports must include the writer's name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

Beat the holiday belly bulge

KAISAANDERSONRD
Contributing Writer

LEARN 10 TIPS TO HEALTHIER LIVING FOR THIS NEW YEAR

The holidays have passed and it is time to put down the eggnog and the cookies, people! It is as much a tradition to give gifts and service during the holiday season, as it is to decide to eat healthier right after it is all over. However, the *New England Journal of Medicine* did a study of 200 people and found most only gained a pound from Thanksgiving to New Year's. This may make you question, "Why are my pants tighter?!" No matter the amount of weight gained, holiday foods tend to be high in calories, fat, sugar, and sodium. Eating too many of these can make you feel bloated, gain weight, and feel terribly guilty for over-indulging. So, I am here to help put you on the right path of healthy eating and lifestyle changes to be successful this year. Follow the tips below for some ways to slim down the spare tire you acquired around your midsection this season.



Make weekly resolutions

Making small weekly goals are more attainable. Not only are they easy to accomplish, but when reinforced with small rewards, you are more likely to stick with them. Make sure your reward fits well with your goal and doesn't cancel everything you worked for. For example, it may not be a good reward to allow yourself a slice of chocolate cake when your goal was to cut out sugary treats during the week. You would most likely eat more than one slice! Be smart, a better reward may be to go to a favorite healthy restaurant to reinforce your behavior of cutting out sugar while still eating healthy foods.

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2 Drink water

This may seem like common sense but I am encouraging you to pick it over any other beverage, including soda, iced teas, juices, alcohol, and that second cup of coffee. The holiday foods you ate are high in salt and carbohydrates, which can cause you to hold on to some water weight. The best way to get this off is to balance your body with drinking more water to flush out the extra salt in your body. Start out every day with a tall glass of water in the morning, and then move on to adding a tall glass with every meal you eat during the day to develop the habit of drinking water regularly.

3 Add fiber to your diet

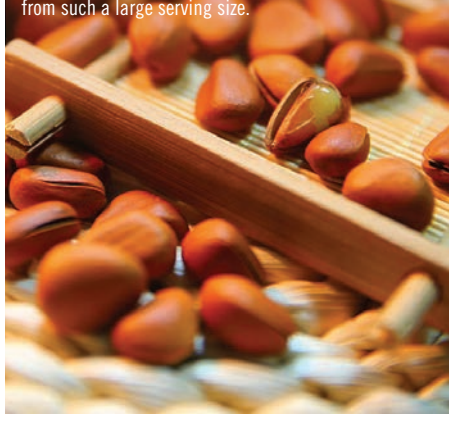
Most holiday foods have little to no fiber. What is fiber? Fiber is a carbohydrate that does not break down nor is it digested by your body. Among other benefits, it is valuable because it helps food to become the best consistency to move smoothly through your digestive tract without adding calories. I recommend gradually increasing fiber in your diet with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Though everything you eat eventually makes it out, it will help with reducing the feeling of being bloated when everything is working like clockwork.

4 Stock up and clean out

The holiday candy sales at the store will be the death of you! Proper shopping at the grocery store will make or break your new healthy habits. A study done by the Cornell Food and Brand Lab tracked spending habits of 207 households, and found they purchased 450 more calories per serving after the holidays compared to the time of Thanksgiving to December. Remember first to get rid of the junk food in the house, then go shopping after you have eaten and are not hungry, then substitute the unhealthy foods for the healthy options. The study mentioned found households were buying healthy foods in addition to the unhealthy ones, instead of replacing them. This ends up increasing calories eaten, leading to weight gain at the start of the new year.

5 Increase protein

Protein promotes the feeling of fullness in your stomach. Increase your protein by substituting your common snacks with a high protein snack option. You will promote the feeling of fullness, while most likely consuming fewer calories. For example, if you choose to eat a string cheese and nuts for a snack, there is a greater chance you will feel satisfied because of the protein content in the food. Compare this to buying a bag of chips for a snack, which will likely lead to more calories consumed from such a large serving size.

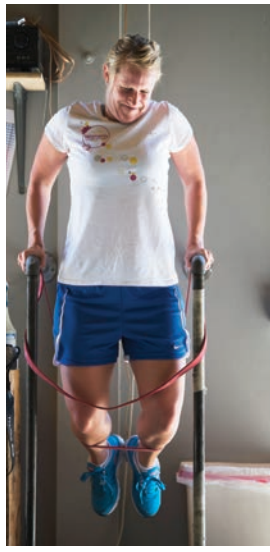


6 Watch your portions

During the holiday we tend to overindulge in the amount we eat. My mother always had a saying when eating dessert as kids, "Your eyes are bigger than your stomach." Meaning, when something looks good we may dish ourselves more than our stomach can actually fit. Keep in mind your portions. If you need to, pull out measuring cups. A good rule of thumb for serving sizes is half a cup for grains, two ounces for protein, one cup of fruit, and one cup of vegetables. Figure out your needed serving of each food group for the day at ChooseMyPlate.gov.

7 Start an easy exercise plan

Go easy on yourself, whether you are starting to exercise or getting back into your old routine, there is no need to make yourself feel pressured to be 100 percent perfect. In the beginning, shoot for the goal of being 85 percent successful. Set goals to do a light physical activity for 30 minutes two to three times a week for a month for the sake of habit; though it won't do much for your waistline. Once you have a rhythm of exercise, add more time and frequency to help lose weight. The recommendation for weight loss it is to get 60-90 minutes of physical activity 3-5 days a week.



8 Get enough sleep

More and more studies are showing links between regulation of your hormones and weight status. If you're consistently getting small amounts of sleep each night your body will compensate with hormones to help your body function properly. A study cited by the Centers for Disease Control showed that a chronic lack of sleep may affect the hypothalamus in the brain which controls appetite and the expenditure of energy. When reaching for that snack, ask yourself, "Am I hungry or just tired right now?" CDC recommends adults get at least 7-8 hours of sleep.

9 Eat frequent and small meals

To help stave cravings, eat small frequent healthy meals and snacks during the day. This fuels your body all day long, helping to avoid the mid-afternoon crash. There are moments where we get busy and may not eat our lunch or dinner on time. Don't let this lead to eating heavy large meals that contain too many calories and are harder to burn off as your day is winding down.

10 Make substitutions for favorites

When you are starting out with new habits, it is important to remember old habits die hard. It is unrealistic to decide to never eat your favorite foods again. If you don't satisfy your cravings for your favorite foods you will falter on any habits you are trying to establish. For example, if you love chocolate ice cream, a good substitute would be a glass of reduced fat chocolate milk. This way you are getting less fat, less sugar, and still satisfying your craving. If you truly love and stock up on your favorite fruit, vegetable, or protein snack, it will satisfy your cravings until you reach your goals.

It is impossible to try all these new healthy habits at once; you will fail otherwise. Please start out with one or two habits for 4-6 weeks. It is important to remember that creating new good habits takes time. Success is yours this year; just take a deep breath! Happy healthy new year!

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FROM FLAB TO FAB

JONPEREZ
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Derek Cutting could easily pose for a fitness magazine or even be one of those instructors you watch on fitness videos. But few people know that before getting that Schwarzenegger-like physique, he used to be like most every other guy out there: obese and out of shape. In fact, he'd be perfect for a before-and-after poster for health and fitness fliers.

"I was basically out of shape my entire childhood and up to my teenage years. I was 20 years old when I weighed 238 lbs and had 32 percent of body fat," said Cutting. "The doctor said that I might have high blood pressure, diabetes, and cardio-vascular problems in the future if I don't change my lifestyle."

That's when he decided to turn his flab into fab, using his regimen at the gym as a way to release anxiety and stress. His work-outs didn't stop even when he got deployed to Afghanistan. "When you get deployed, there's no social life. So I used my spare time to better myself."

That included earning a bachelor's degree in business management entre-preneurial studies under an online degree program at Devry University.

Coupled with strict diet, Cutting reduced his body fat to 12 percent and lost more than 50 lbs. He then started joining body-building tournaments in 2009. In Hawaii, he was competing in four events that were spread out in one year.

"I have no particular plan. I usually start preparing 16 to 20 weeks when I'm going to compete," he said.

Among his latest laurels was clinching the overall bodybuilding crown in last year's Dee Clayton Championships at the Char-ley's Cabaret of the Pacific Islands Club in October. Cutting, competing as a middle-weight, had just come off from a second

Derek Cutting shows off his winning physique to take the overall crown in the bodybuilding category of last Saturday's Dee Clayton Championships at the Pacific Islands Club's Charley's Cabaret.

JON PEREZ

place finish in the 2015 Guam Fitness National Championships held in September at the Leo Palace in Guam.

Cutting, who has been doing his own research on different training techniques and nutritional guidelines, is also a certified personal trainer.

"I've been a trainer for six years now and that's when my wife [Tanya Chong] and I decided to move back here in the CNMI," said Cutting.

Inspired by the need to help residents get fit and have a healthy lifestyle, the couple decided to put up a business called Latte Built Fitness & Nutrition, which "incorporates training, nutrition, and lifestyle changes in order to create a happy and healthy life."

"[Tanya] was the one who came up with the business name since we wanted something that is close to the local culture and the people here would identify with," added Cutting.

Latte stones were used by ancient Chamorros as pillars of their houses. "It represents the history of the local people. Latte is built from ancient stones and it is a pillar of strength."

Cutting got his business license in April and has been busy overseeing his regular

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Derek Cutting, at 20 years old, weighed 238 lbs and had 32 percent of body fat.

boot camps, prepping up the main gym in San Jose, and helping his wife prepare for the birth of their first child.

"I've been juggling a lot of things right now, especially with my wife and me expecting a baby boy in March. Hopefully, we could open the gym on Feb. 1. We're going to announce it so that everyone could check it out and I plan to give a promo where the first 25 to sign up will get free shirts or supplements."

Latte Built's main facility is a studio-type gym at the third floor of the Commonwealth Development Authority building and features functional equipment, free weights, and an open space for working out.

"These are not just typical machines. We're expecting $25,000 worth of equipment from the mainland. There is also some equipment where you can use your body weight in order to strengthen your core," said Cutting.

Holding a boot camp occupies most of his time in the morning. The boot camp is held six days a week either at the Chamolinian Utt in Garapan or at Micro Beach where at one time there were 37 people attending his sessions.

"The boot camp has a fun atmosphere in it where people interact. There's a lot of camaraderie and it has a team building-type of an environment. It's fun to watch everybody cooperating," Cutting said.

"There's an average of 22 to 25 people before Typhoon Soudelor. But we're building back again; now there are 15. A lot of regulars come in since the first day of the camp. They are loyal to themselves and have been sticking with the program," he added.

Cutting also holds one-on-one training sessions outside of the boot camp. "It has faster results. There's one that I'm helping that lost 20 lbs." TS

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5 PRINCIPLES TO KEEP THE FAT OFF

It's that time of the year again where fat loss is on just about everyone's mind. It's become somewhat of a tradition where everybody suddenly decides to get in shape because it's a new year. While it is admirable, the cold hard truth is that the vast majority fail miserably. You set a goal, you take action, but two to three months in, you throw in the towel. Sounds familiar?

Fat loss can be a difficult process, but with a sense of direction, the right attitude and proper instruction, you can be successful. Becoming the best version of yourself is supposed to complement your lifestyle, not take away from it. Here are five principles of fat loss to help you succeed in your efforts for the new year.

DREDELOSSANTOS
Contributing Writer

1 STRENGTH TRAINING

First and foremost, you have to build muscle. One of the biggest mistakes people make when they are trying to get lean is not placing a premium on strength. Curling 5-lb pink dumbbells in an attempt to tone your arms is not going to cut it. Copious amounts of cardio will not give your body a reason to build muscle either. Moreover, long bouts of aerobic-based activity on a day-to-day basis cause the release of an excessive amount of cortisol. In addition to inhibiting formation of additional muscle, excessive amounts of cortisol will cause muscle breakdown and storage of fat. If you want to maximize fat loss, lift an appreciable amount of weight. The more muscle you build, the higher your metabolism rises.

2 FUEL UP

Many people reduce calories in their attempt to lose fat. Here's the thing: increasing your energy expenditure while reducing calories is the equivalent of a dog chasing its tail—you're going nowhere fast. Sure, you might see some results in the beginning, but you'll end up hitting a wall. Eating less will turn down your metabolism, further suppressing your body's ability to break down fat. Concurrently, if you are predominantly eating processed foods and/or drinks, your body will be too busy detoxifying all that crap rather than metabolizing it and using it for energy. Training without proper fuel is not an ideal approach, especially in the long run. Fuel up!

3 MITIGATE STRESS

Managing stress is an often overlooked aspect when it comes to getting in shape. Chronic stress can cause a multitude of problems if left unchecked and it will wreak havoc in your life, not just from a fat loss perspective but for overall health. When your body is out of whack, whether it's due to lack of sleep or other outside stressors, the last thing it wants to do is release energy. Your body will respond by retaining water and accumulating more fat, and you will start to crave sugar. Examine your situation and start to eliminate or at the very least, mitigate what is stressful in your life.

4 DO IT FOR YOU

Hold yourself accountable. You can't depend on anybody but yourself. When being healthy becomes too stressful to you, you're not going to last very long—you have to want it. That's all it boils down to. Intrinsic motivation is absolutely necessary. It's the commitment and discipline to keep going. Habits are indeed hard to break and changing what you eat and drink on a daily basis is not easy, which is why cultivating the right mindset is paramount to your success.

You and only you are responsible for the wellbeing of your life. Set a goal to have a sense of direction. Don't become a victim of your circumstances. It's not a matter of wanting it; it's a matter of how hard you are willing to work for it.

5 MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY

To a lot of people's misfortune, they don't realize the amount of work it takes to improve one's body composition. The kind of changes we want typically involve short-term sacrifices for a long-term payoff. We want immediate satisfaction, but nothing ever comes that easy.

Getting from point A to point B requires patience, so don't be in a rush to drop the excess weight. If your progress is slow, so what? Don't be derailed by that. Most people who try to rush through their fat loss program inevitably gain everything back and more. There are no shortcuts to success. Consistency is key.

With that in mind, don't wait for the calendar to switch over to another year again to start getting back into shape. You don't need to employ fancy workouts or fad diets. Don't bother looking for the most cutting edge workout or that magical nutrition program because there is none. Adapt these principles and stay the course. Fuel your body and move everyday. TS

SUPER BOWL 50

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Joel Fruit finds himself in

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

CNMI National Team member Joel Fruit credits his improved soccer skills to freestyle soccer. But it's not just about becoming a better soccer player. Fruit developed a passion for freestyle soccer to express himself.

"The amazing thing about freestyle soccer is that you can express yourself through it without anybody telling you when or how to train. I always was a bit fascinated with pretty much anything using a soccer ball. I remember when I was a really little kid imagining how 'cool' it would be to be able to juggle and walk at the same time," said Fruit.

A freestyle soccer website in the U.S. defines the sport as "an awesome display of acrobatic and athletic moves performed with a soccer ball and its combination of creativity, imagination, and ball control captures audience's attention everywhere."

Fruit, who has been representing the CNMI in various off-island competitions both in the youth and national levels, only got hooked on freestyle soccer last year. He came across a viral video of a freestyler from Guam and he picked up from there, going so far as competing in the Oceania Freestyle Football Championships 2015 in Australia in October.

"That time I knew a few tricks but didn't really practice. After I saw that video, freestyle soccer just took me off. It's so rewarding when you learn new tricks. It's one of the best feelings in the world," the 18-year-old Tan Holdings Football Club member said.

His personal favorite is the spinning side head stall—"it is where the ball spins while on the side of my head"—but he is a fan of Daniel Dennehy's "swagged out style," a collection of tricks that has wowed the world.

"Freestyle football takes a lot of patience. It may take days, weeks, or even months to learn a given trick. But when you finally do learn whatever trick you're trying to learn, you'll feel like you're on top of the world," said Fruit.

After learning enough tricks, he packed his bags and went to Australia to compete against the best in the region and came home with the Best Newbie award.

"It was great to get an award in my first tournament and perform alongside with some of the best in Oceania. I'll definitely want to go to the Oceania Freestyle Football Championships next year again. And maybe the following year in the Super Ball, which is a much bigger competition where the best freestylers from all over the world go. I'm definitely excited for the future," the Blue Ayuyus said.

Fruit starts every trick by jogging and stretching and loves to accompany his "moves" with an upbeat music.

"I usually listen to music during my training sessions. I listen to a lot of kinds of music but definitely prefer 'upbeat' happy songs rather than depressing music. For clothing it doesn't matter much," he said.

Fruit also loves to do demos or shows for interested groups as he wants to share his skills with fellow soccer players.

"There are a couple other freestylers on Saipan but definitely not as many as I would like there to be and I'd love to encourage others to also freestyle." TS

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freestyle soccer

Joel Fruit shows some of his freestyle soccer tricks during a photo shoot for TAGA Sports at the Oleai Sports Complex.

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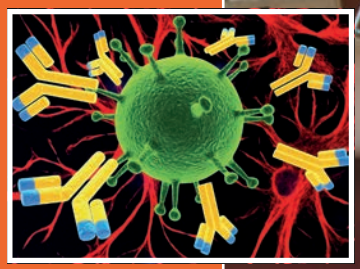

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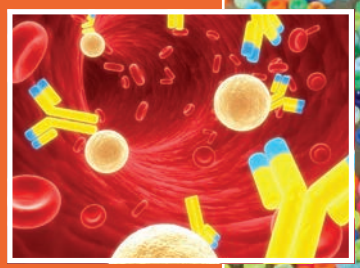

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The Misters, from left, Blake, Tyce, Logan, Dylan, and Angie head to the finish line of last year's Christmas Island Relay.

Keeping it all in the family

JON PEREZ

If there's one thing the sports community our small island can be proud of, it's having a lot of families involved in sports. Parents are not just cheerleaders for their children anymore, becoming competitors themselves and playing against or with their young athletes.

The Misters—father Tyce, mother Angie, and their sons Logan, Blake, and Dylan—lead the growing list of Saipan families that spend their time together joining tournaments.

In last year's 34th Christmas Island Relay, the Misters were among the teams that completed the 13.7-mile run from Pacific Islands

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ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Club in San Antonio to the last Command Post in Marpi.

"It was our second time doing the relay, but we might have had some help the first time from a neighbor as I think our youngest (Dylan) may have been too young at the time. It was quite awhile ago since we participated in the relay. It was really fun and I'm sure we'll do it again next year," said Tyce.

"Another time we competed together as a family was in a volleyball tournament in 2014 at the Pika Festival on Tinian. The first time our youngest stepped up to serve against the other team, I was quite surprised when he hit it over and scored a point. Our boys did really well and we ended up getting second place," he added.

The Mister siblings are also into soccer, swimming, and athletics.

"We encourage the kids to get involved with sports because it is healthy. The kids learn a lot about themselves and often it is a great way for them to meet other kids with similar interests. Depending on the sport but oftentimes the kids learn about the importance of teamwork and communication. It helps them deal with life's victories and disappointments. And it is an awesome way for them to deal with their excessive energy," Tyce said.

Memorable family times

For Randy Steele, some of their most memorable family times were those shared on the playing fields/courts on Saipan. One of them was at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan tennis courts during last year's 7th Tan Holdings Tennis Classic.

"My son Richard played in the U12 doubles finals and on the adjacent court was where the mini tennis was being held. I saw that he and his partner Rintaro [Miyawaki] would watch Lyssa (Randy's daughter) during side change breaks. That was pretty cool to see," said Randy, who teamed up with his son in the men's 3.0 doubles in the same tournament and they made it to the finals.

"Playing doubles with Richard is an aging, athletic dad's dream partnership of course. And I don't force him to play with me. He really likes it as long as I keep my cool on the court," he added.

After seeing three of them competing in the Tan Holdings tournament, Randy's wife Larissa is now motivated to take tennis lessons.

Besides tennis, the Steele siblings play soccer too and are coached by, who else, their father.

"I coached Richard since he was 5 years old. Last year, I coached my daughter's U8 team so they are very used to having me involved in their sports activities and Mom is always on the sidelines, cheering," Randy said.

"Over the years, some parents have considered me a bit 'hardcore,' perhaps focused too much on winning. Guilty as charged, there is nothing wrong with wanting to win. But I always tell my kids to show good sportsmanship and, most importantly, to have fun."

Teamwork

The Tans—father Samson, mother Bel, and daughter Angel—joined the solo division of last year's Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle Race.

Completing the 100-kilometer race is no joke, especially in a very challenging course that a bunch of Taiwanese pros called a "killer" because of a lot of uphill climbs. To survive the test, the Tans worked together.

Samson was in charge of providing techni-

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cal tips for biking, while Bel took care of the nutrition part.

"Mom tells us when to hydrate and what to eat before and after the practice rides," said Angel, whose role was to motivate her parents and accompany one of them to training when the other was unavailable.

"Sam was the one hammering us to practice as much as we can and Angel is always ready to take up the challenge, that's why we are inspired by her dedication to the sport," said Bel.

Angel made the switch to biking and triathlon from swimming after seeing her parents enjoy hopping on their bikes, while Sam got into it as his wife prodded him to find a way to exercise if she can't get him back inside the gym.

"At first we got an old bike for him to try and he kind of liked it so I accompanied him just to get the hang of it, then we started joining competitions and before we knew it we're hooked," Bel said.

"As a family, [biking] gives us more time to be together since riding takes more hours of our off day. While riding together, we talk, laugh and challenge each other. It doesn't matter if we finish late because we don't have to worry that someone is waiting for us to come home," Samson said.

Challenge and motivation

Couples Brad and Kathy Ruszala and Russ and Kanae Quinn joined the Hell of Marianas, challenging each other and training together for the grueling 100K race.

"Challenging Brad is always fun. He is competitive, hardworking, and he never lets me win. So when I do beat him, it makes it so much sweeter," said Kathy, who has had her share of wins against her husband in previous races but not in last year's cycling event.

"The challenge was for her and teammate [Rachel Epperson] to beat me," said Brad, who clocked in at 5:06:43, nearly 18 minutes ahead of Kathy and Epperson's time (5:23:23)

Kathy did the race despite some second thoughts. "I walked in to Bike Pro one day to pick up my mountain bike that needed

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Opposite page: From left, Lyssa, Randy, and Richard Steele show their awards during the banquet for the 7th Annual Tan Holdings Tennis Classic at the Hibiscus Hall of Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan. **Above:** Samson Tan, left, and daughter Angel, right, join Bel for a group photo after the latter completed a race. **Bottom:** Husband and wife Brad and Kathy Ruszala pose for a photo with their son Keoni after participating in the 2014 SSC Jingle Bell Fun Run.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

servicing. When Romy pointed at the new, shiny road bike, I was ecstatic! When my high dissipated, I realized that I couldn't back out from the race and I had to learn how to use clip-ons. Maybe I panicked a little," she said.

Brad, however, credited his wife for pushing him to train for the race. "I gave a bunch of tips, but Kathy provided me with the motivation. Were it not for her, I would not have trained as consistently or as rigorously," he said.

"We did practice rides together and structured our workouts so we could ride together even though we were at different experience levels. While the training was key to finishing the race, it wasn't as important as enjoying our time together," Brad added.

Another husband and wife tandem—the Quinns—treasure the time they spend together training and competing than winning any race.

"We don't necessarily remember the wins, as the training time is more memorable," said Kanae, who has a long list of events she and Russ did together either as a team or solo competitors.

"I started triathlons back in 2000 but Russ started earlier in the '80s before we met. We've done numerous fun runs, 10Ks, a few half marathons [on Rota], HOM, XTERRA Saipan, XTERRA World Championships in 2002, Tagaman, Rota Blue Triathlon, Tinian Turquoise Triathlon, Christmas Relay, etc. There are too many to count," she said.

Not even hip surgery (Russ) and recovery from injury (Kanae in 2014) could stop the couple from doing triathlons, runs, and bike races.

"Competing in races gives us a target to train. We like to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle so the races keep us motivated," said Kanae, who incidentally finished at No. 28 (4:16:45) in the Hell of Marianas, while Russ came in at No. 29 (4:24:57).

Better understanding

Before competing in the Tan Holdings Tennis Classic late last year, Ami Miyawaki used to wonder why her kids—Rintaro and Malika—often double-fault. It all seems so easy just by looking at them play.

Ami had her questions answered when she debuted in the Tan Holdings tournament and teamed up with Megumi Sekiguchi in the women's doubles 3.0.

"It's not easy as I thought it was. You can't just serve and think it will go in. There's the wind or sun factor. Now I get it and understand why my children commit mistakes," Ami said.

"Playing tennis makes me realize how my kids really work hard to improve their game," she added.

The Miyawakis were joined in the Tan Holdings tournament by the Kagas (Coume and Conatsu and mother Ayumi), the Tans (Lydia and Tania), and Rais (Aditya and Rai), and the family list could get longer, which our close community surely welcomes. TS

Left: Russ, center, and Kanae Quinn head to the finish line of the inaugural Hafa Adai 5K Color Run. **Above:** Ami, Malika, and Rintaro Miyawaki show the plaques they won in last year's 7th Annual Tan Holdings Tennis Classic.

GARAGE GYM

JONPEREZ
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

The environment can be your own gym.

Former CNMI men's national team member James Lee and five of his friends did just that, turning his garage and adjacent yard into a gym that they regularly use to get in shape.

Using their own weight and whatever else is on hand, you'd see them doing cardio exercises like jumping rope, tire jumps, carrying a tire truck or using the edge of a concrete roof as a pull-up bar.

"Others join a gym while some choose to do some research online and do it on their own. You could exercise at home, jog, walk or hike and enjoy the outdoors. There's really no excuse not to get in shape," said Lee, a fitness instructor certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine.

"You could be at home doing push-ups or go to the gym where you follow a regular program. Even when you're travelling or inside your hotel room, you could do exercises even without any equipment. Increasing the tempo of what you've been doing helps you burn more calories."

Lee has always been passionate about physical activity. He played basketball under CNMI national coaches Rufino Aguon and Elias Rangamar, who is also his mentor in athletics, and is a regular outrigger canoe paddler.

"I started with basic routines like the ones I learned from coach Eli when I was still training under him in track and basketball. Then I worked out on my own, applying what I learned while doing online research," said Lee.

Work and a basketball-related injury slowed him down, which proved to be a blessing in disguise since Hoopaholics teammates Jerry Diaz and Walter Mendez were also recovering from separate injuries.

"We began the process of getting back in shape where we use two resistance bands, a pull-up bar and run from Oleai Beach to 13 Fishermen along the Beach Road pathway. Slowly, we helped each other recover from our injuries," said Lee.

Another triumvirate joined them after Kelvin Fitial, who is aiming to enter the mixed martial arts scene again, Maverick Itibus, and Peter Sablan also signed up.

That got Lee to buy other equipment like the Perfect Push Up, a medicine ball, kettle bells, hurdles and bunjee cords that he stores inside his garage. "Peter then donated the tire that we also use. We flip it, carry it and even jump on it."

Getting certified as a trainer helped Lee share his knowledge and skills with his friends, especially when Mendez suffered an injury while playing basketball. "I've learned so much after getting my certification from

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NASM, like body function, bio mechanics, proper forms and proper training that I share with my friends."

"James has been with us every step of the way. As a trainer, he never forces you to do things that you couldn't do. I'm not giving myself any time frame with my recovery since I know the extent of my injury. I'm a very active person, that's why I hate to be limited in things that I usually do," said Mendez.

Lee said that even a trainer needs to evolve in the things that they share with their students. "You are there to guide someone to have a healthy life. That's why you need to make sure that what they are going to do is safe and they do it in proper form."

Lee doesn't immediately introduce weights under his program. He would rather assess first if you have muscle imbalance. "I usually do stages where, first, I test your stability and form. I always give individual safe

workout tests before pushing through."

"A ball squat looks easy, but I always check your form to see if the ball is sliding properly or if your knees are caving in. It is a trainer's responsibility to [make sure you] avoid getting injured and have the ability to function properly."

Lee shared what he has learned when he helped basketball coach Joe Diaz conduct physical drills with players under the Rollers program. "All are researched online and are safe for kids."

Lee is doing all these for free and is not collecting fees from his friends. "I'm okay where I am right now. I'm happy just to help and pass my knowledge to these guys. All I need from them is a three-month commitment."

"It has been a social workout for us. It keeps us close and it's a good excuse for our wives to go here," said Diaz with a laugh. TS

DALEWIN

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

In his four years on Saipan, Dalewin Cortez was the bane of opposing players who dared wander into the shaded lane he patrolled like an attack dog that hasn't eaten for days. On offense, the 6'3" native of Ternate, Cavite in the Philippines was an offensive machine with his array of post-up moves.

Cortez first came into the local basketball scene after leading Aqua Resort Club to its first title in the 2004 season of the Mobil Oil Marianas Co-ed Invitational Basketball League.

He paced the hoteliers in scoring with a hefty 21.8 points per game average in eight games during the eliminations. A factor in both offense and defense, Cortez then fired a team-high 32 points in Aqua Resort's title-clinching 103-93 win.

Cortez went on to play for other leagues, most notably Cabalen in the UFO basketball league and 2006 Inter-Restaurant Basketball League champion Naked Fish.

The gentle giant now lives and works in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He first found work as a bartender at a hotel and Hard Rock Café Dubai but is now employed at MSC Cruise Line.

In his spare time, the former varsity player of New Era University in Quezon City, Philippines, suits up for various leagues as his height and skill set is an instant magnet for basketball teams seeking immediate legitimacy.

He readily admits that he didn't want to leave the island in 2008, but a great oppor-

CORTEZ

tunity to work in Florida forced him to pack his bags. His dream, however, turned into a mirage when his U.S. visa was denied so he ended up applying for Dubai in the United Arab Emirates instead.

"In Dubai I played in a lot of basketball leagues and they were very competitive because there were a lot of semi-professional basketball players from the Philippines [Metropolitan Basketball Association and Philippine Basketball League]," he told TAGA *Sports* in Filipino.

He has given a good account of himself playing in the Middle East, averaging double digits and hauling a good share of rebounds in competitions there.

The now 35-year-old Cortez admits, though, that playing basketball on Saipan was the best experience he ever had on the hard court. He also pines for the simple life in the Commonwealth.

"I really miss Saipan because of how simple life there was. I had lot of friends there and I miss playing basketball there a lot. The camaraderie among players—teammates and opposing players—is just unmatched. The difference between basketball on Saipan and any other place is everyone who plays basketball there are friends. The crowd support is also out of this world," he said.

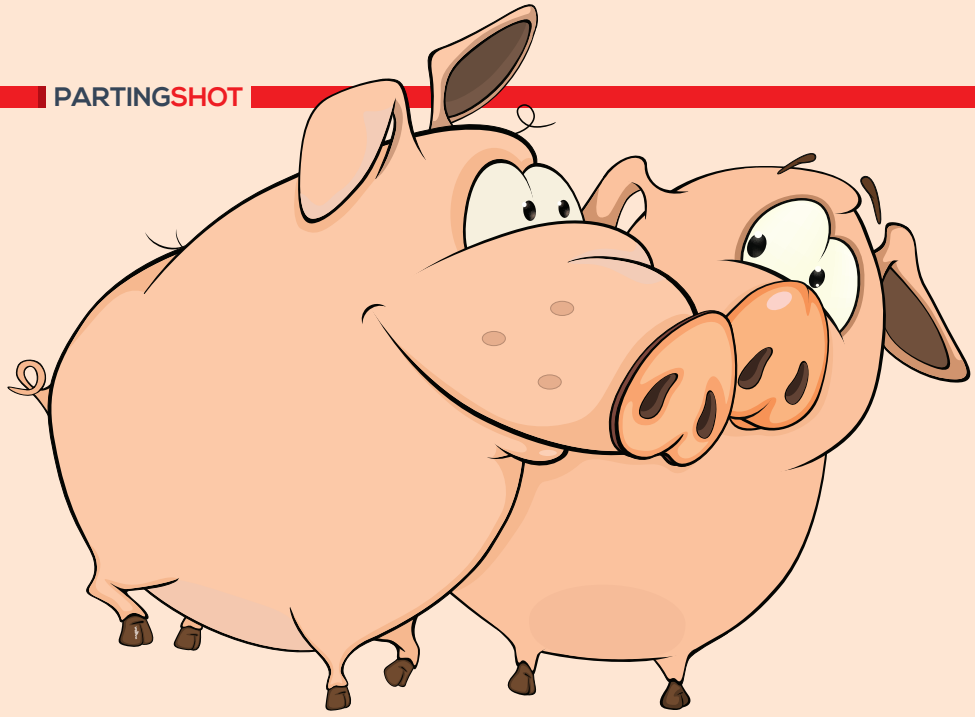
What sticks out the most during his basketball days on Saipan was the championship he helped Aqua Resort Club hoist in 2004.

"The company really backed us up during our run to the championship. Our co-employees always showed up during the game and I want to thank our coach, Manny Barcial, F&B manager of the hotel, who also happens to be my godfather in my marriage, for guiding us to the championship," he said.

Cortez, who started dribbling and shooting the basketball at the tender age of 5, only has this advise to those who want to get into basketball: "Love the game and work hard!"

He hopes to visit Saipan again someday and, if opportunity again knocks, work again on the island he once called home.

Far left, Dalewin Cortez hoists the MVP trophy of the 2004 Mobil Oil Marianas Co-ed Invitational Basketball League. Other photos show Cortez posing with teammates at the start of various league he joined in the United Arab Emirates.



Spreading the holiday chow…I mean, cheer

JIMRAYPHAND
Contributing Writer

By the time you are reading this, the New Year should have begun and I should be well immersed into my annual resolution to lose weight and get fit; that is to say, I should have lost some pounds and be well on my way to becoming a healthier, more productive me. At the time of this writing, however, the holiday season is in full swing with Christmas and the New Year yet to come and the pounds are piling on.

After all, the holiday season—starting somewhere around Thanksgiving—is a time to be merry, bright and (let's face it) eat and drink too much. Still, the New Year holds the key and promise of something better to come, at least in terms of a healthier mind, body and soul, right?

Alas, *Time* magazine published (a few years back) a list of "Top 10 Commonly Broken New Year's Resolutions" and at the top of that list at No. 1 was…you guessed it… Lose Weight and Get Fit. Coincidentally, No. 4 was Eat Healthier and Diet and No. 10 was Drink Less—a pretty good indication of what the holidays do to us, I think.

Of course, some of us are more vigilant than others when it comes to staying in shape and working year-round (*pun intended*, round is a shape) to keep our girlish figures. I, for instance, took up pig farming some years back with the idea that, among other things, I needed a hobby (and not just any hobby but one that would keep me active and…exercising). No doubt pig farming is very physical, backbreaking work with an obscene amount of heavy lifting every day. Unfortunately (unless I were to run back and forth with the slop buckets), there just isn't enough cardio work involved. There is, however, an abundance of pork chops and ham that comes with being a pig farmer. Pork is like another fruit of the land: "You can barbecue it, boil it, broil it, bake it, sauté it. Dey's uh, (pork)-kabobs, (pork) creole, (pork) gumbo. Pan fried, deep fried, stir-fried. There's pineapple (pork), lemon (pork), coconut (pork), pepper (pork), (pork) soup, (pork) stew, (pork) salad, (pork) and potatoes, (pork) burger, (pork) sandwich. That…that's about it" [Bubba]. Oh except, there's also pork adobo and pork fritada made from the blood and innards and such… can you believe that? So, the pigger gets bigger from piggin' and diggin' on the little piggies that never make it to market, but go wee, wee, wee all way to the dinner table.

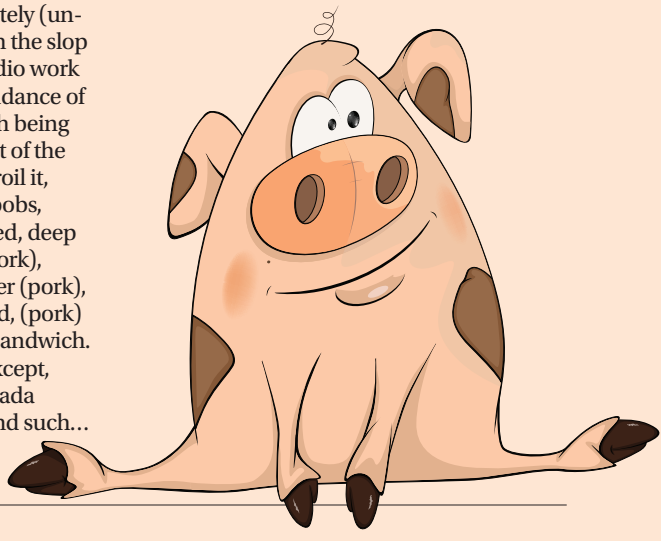
Our family doctor commented to me that, "For the life of me, I just can't understand people's obsession with bacon." I shuddered to think what he might say if he actually knew what other parts of the pig with which I am obsessed and of which I chow on a regular basis. The same doctor insisted I get a diabetes checkup the last time I saw him. "Because of your weight," he said—not my finest moment although my sugar levels were good and I walked away with my usual diagnosis of fat but otherwise healthy…at least for the time being.

The truth is I got a little scared about what the tests might reveal. And the point is that the residual effects of carrying around excess weight are deadly. As one doctor points out, *"…it's clear from a vast body of research that obesity and mortality are associated, and that a higher BMI is tied to earlier death as well as higher rates of disease, many of which are serious."* [Harvey Grill, PhD, president of The Obesity Society].

I've heard it said that the first step to solving any problem is admitting that there is one. So maybe, for this year, we can admit that our "weight issues" ought not to be taken lightly (so to speak), but that we should not be afraid to talk about them openly with genuine intent to do something about it. Perhaps the sooner that people can take their emotional prejudices or low self-esteems off the issue and stop tip-toeing around it like a forbidden topic, the better the likelihood that we can address fatness for what it is—a potentially, life-threatening condition of the body. And that being fat is not a matter of feelings but a simple matter of fact: you're either fat or you're not.

As for the Pig Farmer and the New Year's Resolution, No. 1: Lose Weight and Get Fit, and No. 2: Stop Delving into your Own Product (except during the holiday season).

And that's all I've got to say about that. Happy New Year!



May the New Year bring strength, wisdom, and success to our athletes and officials as they compete and try to bring honor to the CNMI.

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